
The Catalyst



The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks
Spring 2000

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Poll Finds Support for Resource Protection

A poll recently released by Americans for Our Heritage and Recreation (www.ahrinfo.org) finds there is widespread support for the protection of land, water and open space. The poll, "American Views on Land & Water Conservation," found that nearly 90% of respondents feared that special places will be lost unless action is taken now to protect them.



At the top of the list of choices for use of land conservation funding, with 89% of respondents agreeing, was protecting wildlife habitat for native plants and animals. Matching local funds to help local communities achieve environmental priorities came in second (88%), followed by expanding existing national parks, forest and recreation areas (87%).

One argument that "there is already too much public land" ranked last among four statements aimed at eliciting opposition to land conservation. Only 12% found the argument most persuasive.



National Volunteer Week

April 9 - 13

How are you celebrating?

What's Inside

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Contributor's Guidelines

Catalyst welcomes your original articles of any length! Or, send copies of stories published elsewhere that you think our readers will appreciate. Be sure to include information about the publication so we can get permission to use the material. You may submit an article at any time.

We **really** appreciate articles submitted on disk or by e-mail. We can read most formats of DOS/Windows disks. Printed manuscripts, facsimile or phone messages are also accepted. Please advise if you would like your diskette returned, otherwise we will recycle it in our office to save postage.

Illustrations are strongly encouraged. Drawings, graphs or other illustrations may be submitted on disk or hard copy. Black & white glossy photos are preferred; color prints or slides are usually acceptable. All photos and artwork submitted will be returned promptly.

Bill Lindemann is searching for personal stories of profound childhood nature experience. He would like to find people who had fundamental childhood experiences that positively influenced their natural and/or environmental beliefs and values. His interest is in collecting and publishing these stories. If you have had such an experience, please send it in. If you know of others who may have had such an experience, please forward this information to them.

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From the Editor

Welcome to the first Catalyst of 2000! We looked everywhere and packed this issue full of the best interpretive stuff we could find. The very next page is just brimming with events, materials and good stuff for interpreters. The Catalyst web site offers one-click access to bring these resources to a computer near you. As usual, you'll find the Master Interpreter presiding over page 5 offering gratuitous advice to the interpretively challenged.



Could your interpretive programs use a little "magic?" Check out *Making Magic* on page 6. Written by Joyce E. Meredith, Ph.D. of Down to Earth Consulting in Hebron, OH, it also appeared in *FourThought*, the NAI Region 4 Newsletter. You can reach her at downtoearth@voyager.net.

Don't miss the short piece on interpretive leadership back on page 7. It was compiled from a broad cross-section of national park interpreters, and I think you will find the ideas work in our department, too.

Page 8 brings a thoughtful piece on the state of interpretation today. While rather critical, it is written with a light touch and I think you will enjoy it. It comes to us from Greg Picard of Russian River / Mendocino District who can be found at gpicard@mcn.org.

There has been a lot of interest in digital cameras lately. See page 10 for one man's opinion of this fast-moving field.

If you need a little money for a volunteer project, you will want to see page 12 with Heather Fargo's write-up on the Ranger Lane Volunteer Fund offered through the California State Park Foundation. Call Heather at (916) 653-8819.

There is a new book you should know about and perhaps consider selling at your site. A book review of *My Nature Journal* appears on page 13. It was reviewed

by Ellen Absher, Interpreter I at Mount San Jacinto State Park. Ellen would love to hear from you at absher@statepark.org.

We can all use an occasional reminder about providing excellent customer service. You will find ten reminders on page 14. This article comes to us from Melanie Thornton of Toltec Mounds State Park in Arkansas. It also appeared in *Visions*, the NAI Region 6 newsletter. Melanie can be reached at melanie309@aol.com.

If you are involved in exhibit planning, you may be interested in the next story. David Krimmel Design recently completed a design contract for Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. David tells us about the project on page 16. You can reach him at (619) 563-9717.

Page 18 offers a sneak preview of the new park activities flyer. These new attractive, colorful pages will be appearing soon on a bulletin board near you!

Wes Chapin sends an update on the work of the Interpretive Improvement Team which you can find on page 19. Wes is at calparks@rain.org. Following, on page 20, you will find a related article on Interpretive Training written by Scott Nakaji. Scott is at scott_nakaji@mott-training.parks.ca.us.

And don't miss the special offer way back on page 22. Here is your chance to win a free registration to the National Interpreter's Workshop. YOU should think about going this year, and now is the time to start planning.

The Sesquicentennial Celebration is reaching its peak, so you can't afford to miss the Parks 150 page. And you will also find California's Tapestry in the usual place.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Special thanks to those of you who have taken the time to tell us that you read and appreciate *Catalyst*. Keep reading and keep interpreting!

Brian Cahill, Editor

What's Up?



Interpreters' Resources

Understanding Deserts

A late-spring workshop on *Understanding and Interpreting Deserts* has just been announced. It will be held May 8-10. There will be speakers presenting current research findings, hands-on experiences and some very unique field training opportunities. There will be no charge for permanent DPR employees and a very reasonable price for others. Watch for full details soon!

Environmental Ed Discussion

UC Berkeley invites you to join some of the world's leading authorities in the field for a morning discussion of some innovative programs and the future of environmental education. Titled *Beyond Nature Walks: Advancing Environmental Education* it will be held June 3 and only costs \$10. For information call (510) 643-7143 or e-mail env.unx.berkeley.edu.

Audubon Camp

Scholarships are available to send you to the Audubon Camp in Wyoming this summer. Call Audubon at (916) 481-5332 to ask about the Scully Scholarship program.

National Interpreter's Workshop

November 7 - 10, Tucson AZ. Mark your Calendars now! See page 22 or for more information see: <http://www.interpnet.org/>

Copyright Fun

Copyright is a weird wonderful legal world, being pushed to the limits by the Web. Here is a FUN site that will help get you up to speed on the basics of copyright law. See the notorious pillagers of copyright on the big screen! Watch real life visual examples. Hear the notorious audio pillagers of copyright! Check out real life audio examples, listen and decide for yourself. Take a look at some of the bleeding edge issues involving distribution of copyrighted materials across the Net. See: <http://www.benedict.com/>

California Online Archive

Archives, libraries and historical societies throughout the state are included in this exciting new database. For example, you will find excellent guides to the Jack London Papers in an easy to access format. Or peruse the Berkeley Art Museum, the Getty, the Hoover Institute, the SF Maritime Museum archives and lots more! Check it out at www.oac.cdlib.org

Cake Pictures

Imagine your next volunteer recognition event with a cake that has a photo of the volunteers right on it! Or perhaps you'd like to put the DPR logo on top of a layer cake, or an edible blueprint of your planned visitor center on a sheet cake. Just send them a photo or other computer image file and it can be printed on a thin, edible sheet that dissolves right into the cake frosting see <http://www.easy2save.com>.

Teaching with Historic Places

The NPS National Register of Historic Places program has published 55 classroom-ready lesson plans based on historic properties throughout the country. Titles of local interest include: *Californio to American: A study of Cultural Change* (#8) and *Frankish Building: Reflection of Success of Ontario, CA* (#43). Others are on the web: www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp or for a complete list call them at (202) 343-9536.

Mammal Slides Available

The American Society of Mammologists has made over 1300 slides of mammals available for educators and scientists. This is a non-profit service, so the fees are reasonable. For information see: www.emporia.edu/biosci/msl/home.htm.

Fish & Game Resources

The California Department of Fish & Game offers a free guide to its services, programs and people. Request a copy of the *Directory of Public Resources* from DFG/Conservation Education, 1416 Ninth St, Room 1240, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Volunteer Recognition

Another great catalog for volunteer recognition items is available from Great Events Publishing — Just in time for National Volunteer Week (April 9-13). Ask for their *Thank You Volunteers and Staff Catalog* at (888) 43EVENT.

Visit us on the Web!
Direct Links to these
items can be found at:
www.statepark.org/catalyst

Dear Master Interpreter

Dear Master Interpreter,

It seems like someone will come up and tell me my interpretive program was good, even when I am sure

I have just given my worst program ever. I don't think I can trust my audience! Maybe I really am a lousy interpreter.



Worried

Dear Worried,

Keep worrying — that is a good sign! A recently published study concluded that the most incompetent people have no idea they are incompetent. In fact, they are more confident of their abilities than people who do things well! Perhaps some peer evaluation would also be helpful to you.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

I recently took a tour at a popular historic site. Our interpreter was friendly and knowledgeable, but one thing troubled me. Much of his story involved the strong religious beliefs of the people who lived there and the workings of their church. Yet the interpreter seemed to be a real "outsider" when it came to the traditions of this religion. It showed in both what he said and how he said it. Am I just being overly sensitive because I was raised in that faith?

Concerned Insider

Dear Insider,

You have stumbled upon one of interpretation's trickiest situations. Faith is central to so many historic stories, and few interpreters have the in-depth background to interpret it knowledgeably. Whether you are interpreting Native American beliefs or the role of the Catholic Church in developing missions or the fascinating story of the Mormon Battalion it is easy to get in over your head. So what's a conscientious interpreter to do? Get help! Perhaps a friend or co-worker from that faith or tradition can give you some pointers. Read everything you can on the subject. Recognize its complexity — avoid the urge to oversimplify, and show respect. You may still be an outsider, but you don't have to sound like one!

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

Do you ever watch TV? Perhaps you have seen *The Crocodile Hunter*. It is captivating television, and he always includes a strong conservation message. I am concerned about the ideas he gives folks by handling all these dangerous critters. My colleague insists that is just the "hook" to get us to watch which allows him to reach us with his conservation message. What do you say, is he an interpreter or a menace?

Couch Potato

Dear Potato,

Perhaps the Crocodile Hunter is a little bit of both. If he is spreading understanding about dangerous and

misunderstood reptiles, I wish him well. But I must go back to the old line my dad used to quote: "What you are doing speaks so loudly I can't hear what you are saying." I **do** have strong reservations about the behavior he is modeling. I am sure his show will continue to be popular but perhaps it's a good reminder to each of us to be more aware of the behavior we model to our visitors.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

I do a lot of school programs. Sometimes it seems that they only come to the park to have fun. Am I really having any impact on these kids?

Babysitter

Dear Sitter,

You will be pleased to hear some exciting new interpretive research. Researchers went back to survey kids who participated in interpretive programs (just like yours) **three years** after the program to see what they remember. The kids easily remembered the action-oriented activities and games (along with the concepts that were embedded in those games). They remembered hand-held objects. The kids also remembered the personality of the interpreter — showing just how important an interpreter's style can be. Researchers also discovered a measurable positive attitude about the site, showing that attitudes **are** effected by interpretation, even three years later! So keep at it!

MI

Making Magic

By Joyce Meredith

As I write this, it's two weeks 'til Christmas, and I've been busy decorating for the holidays. This annual ritual has taken on new meaning for me since I became a mom a year and a half ago. Instead of feeling harried by the yearly obligation to carry boxes down from the attic, unpack ornaments, untangle lights, find extension cords . . . you know the drill, I find myself wondering how all this will look through my son's eyes.

Though it sounds cliché, Christmas was pure magic for me when I was a kid: the weeks, then days, then hours of anticipation; the temptation to peek into closets and rattle packages; the way our Christmas tree looked in the corner of our living room; the worn collection of Christmas records we played over and over every year; that plate of crumbs left from the cookies we set out for Santa on Christmas Eve . . . Wow! He ate 'em!! I'm remembering these things in a fresh way, and I'm experiencing a new kind of anticipation as I try to create that same Christmas magic for my son.

What does this have to do with interpretation? Interpretation is about making magic. It's about creating "wow" experiences for people that inspire them and stay in their memories. Making magic is revelation and provocation at its best.

Well-known educator Steve Van Matre talks about magic in his book *Earth Education: A New Beginning*

(1990, Institute for Earth Education). He calls magic the "secret ingredient" of effective learning experiences. Unlike some other educational terms, magic doesn't have a precise technical definition. Van Matre describes it like this: "Suffice it to say that magic promises something that will dazzle and entrance you . . . magic personally grabs onto you and tugs. Don't worry, you will know it when you feel it, for a surge of emotion wells up inside you in response to its pull" (Van Matre, 1990, p. 198).

How do we add *magic* to our program? There's no single way, but Van Matre offers some key components of making magic. One is **fantasy**. When I was a young child, my playmates and I once spent an afternoon making wings of construction paper. We were going to tape them on our backs so we could fly.

And we really believed it would work! In the end it didn't matter that we never got off the ground. The process was immensely enjoyable. It was magic. Everyone, even adults, likes to pretend. Magic lets us go beyond the real world.

Another technique is setting up **"magical moments."** Waking up on Christmas morning to find crumbs instead of the cookies I'd left for Santa was a magical moment. Someone (probably my father) set that moment up for me. It didn't require special effects. My imagination filled in everything I needed to have a "wow" experience, and it was magic.

Here are some other techniques Van Matre offers for making magic:

Set up a discovery. Send a secret message. Use clues and riddles. Do the unexpected. Wear a costume. Forecast events to build anticipation. Prepare a surprise.

Making magic is not as simple as throwing a couple of these techniques into a program. It requires lots of planning and preparation. Any parent who's pulled an all-nighter poring over toy assembly instructions on Christmas Eve knows that. Magic is the secret ingredient of well-planned, structured learning experiences, not an end in itself. Magic should enhance sound learning, not get in its way. For more complete coverage of this topic, I suggest reading (or rereading) Van Matre's books. Then put the books down and let your imagination go to work.

By now, the holidays are past, and people are settling into the routines of work, school, home, and community. Holidays help us recharge and rejuvenate, not just because they offer a break from work, but because they add a little magic to our lives. Good interpretation does the same thing. We can create the "wow" experiences for people that recharge and rejuvenate them. We can help people discover the fantastic. We can set up the magical moments that foster a sense of caring for the resources we interpret.

Let's go make some magic.



Interpretive Leadership

National Park Service field rangers were asked to share their answers to the following question: What makes an effective Chief of Interpretation? Answers were received from parks throughout the country, urban, suburban and rural, from seasonals and permanents, and from law enforcement and interpretive rangers. The common themes gathered from those responses are listed below. The compiler does not make any claim that the following list is scientific in nature, nor that the responses are listed in any order of importance.



An Effective Chief of Interpretation Is:

1. A realistic visionary, who offers leadership, leads by example, and/or is a role model for the entire division.
2. One who recognizes the importance of training and developing staff, and utilizes the talents and abilities of the staff to the full.
3. Open to new ideas and willing to allow his/her staff to be creative.

staff, public, other divisions and management.

5. One who gives proper credit when credit is due.
6. One who has had field experience within the last five years, and/or maintains intimate contact with the field (i.e. conducts occasional programs, attends programs occasionally, works visitor center desks/contact stations/fee booths occasionally,

7. Is familiar with the latest trends in Interpretation (i.e. interpretive competencies) and makes efforts to demonstrate at least one competency.

8. One who makes him/herself aware of alternative sources of funding, and both seeks such out and encourages staff to do the same.

9. One who involves staff in interpretive planning and development.

10. One who respects the role of the supervisory ranger, delegates authority and works well with other chiefs/division heads, supervisors, management and the line staff.

"An effective chief will have the enthusiasm of a seasonal, and the knowledge and experience of an emeritus professor."

—an anonymous field ranger

4. A good communicator and articulator of the mission and goals of Interpretation in the park/Service to

holds regular division meetings, roves the park occasionally and listens to and entertains staff comments/concerns.

Summary statement:

An effective chief is both a role model and a manager, involved yet unintrusive, a leader, visionary, open-minded trainer who gives credit where credit is due, and delegates based on talents and skills of staff.

The Interpreter: A Critical Look

By Ranger G.W. Picard
Russian River Mendocino Dist.

When I was learning how to give programs, my role model was Ranger Bob La Belle. I heard his campfire at Richardson Grove State Park, and I wanted to be like him! He captivated the audience and had a deep understanding of his subject. I continued to watch and admire others over the years. I guess I've been reviewing other rangers' programs for close to 20 years now, and I've actually been doing a lot more lately in the course of vacations to other state and national parks. The results are somewhat disturbing. I probably would keep this all to myself if it weren't for the campfire I attended while staying at one of the west coast's trophy national parks this summer. Let's just call it the proverbial last straw, and what it tells me is we aren't paying enough attention to how we select and train interpreters.

This program began with a traditional campfire burning, but the ranger was on a monolithic stage 4 feet up and 20 feet away from the audience of about 150 people who had gathered. The center was built to hold at least 500, but in recent years I've noticed that it's difficult to compete with people who bring a motor home directly hard-wired to Godzilla in the Nintendo Main Frame in Tokyo. Then, too, satellite TV makes a trip to the mountains no different for many than a trip to the living room. How do you compete with Mr. Whipple squeezing the Charmin' or the murder and mayhem



we can view first-hand on the tube? Why sit in the cold, smelling smoke and listening to a program that all too often smells even worse?

This program that annoyed me so much was ostensibly about the "Spotted Owl." This is an extremely liberal and kind interpretation of what

neat, we really need it. Everything is related to everything else. It's cool! And what we do is sort of like, you know, Karma." For a while I wasn't sure whether we had changed topic to a Hari Krishna praise of the Internet. This "valley girl" went downhill from there, giving no coherence to the talk; and with the

Where are we failing in teaching and expecting good (and accurate!) interpretation?

it was about. Actually, the program was a collection of slides covering flying squirrels, National Park Service enabling policies, wolves, salmon, elk, and how mountains are formed. I am sure no outline was written for it. Just a collection of slides. However, there were three slides of spotted owls, so I guess by sheer weight of numerics it became a program about spotted owls.

She began her program discussing the web of life with the sentence (and I quote here) *"The web is really*

exception of the fact that she pointed out that the wolves and grizzlies were "*extirpated*,"¹ few words had more than one syllable. We were treated to her very own "factoid" that no one even knew the "biome" (which she said was "*really far out*") existed ten years ago. (We only discovered sunlight sometime in the '60s, I guess.) We also found out from her that the spotted owl only lives in the 11% of virgin old growth that still exists.² I will enjoy telling that to the loggers in Mendocino who keep tripping over their nests in their 80

year-old second growth. She then proceeded to blow a whistle she said is used to call spotted owls (available, I anticipate, in the Park Mall and Convenience Store, open 8AM to 8PM right next to the campground for \$4.95—which is also their price per gallon this year for gasoline!)

We also were informed *"There are lots of salmon here, and they are also really neat and important. Loggers aren't, and we use too much wood anyway. Salmon fishing is a really huge industry on the pacific coast"* (never mind the fact the fishery is falling apart and that I've thrown wetter spit wads in Jr. High School than what we have left as decent spawning creeks in parts of the Northwest.) At the end of the talk she assigned musical instruments to each animal (the loggers got the kettle drum) and then played a symphony as the bats gobbled up insects around the listeners' ears. She closed the program with a long quote by Freeman Tilden (who is to interpretation what God is to creation) on what an interpreter is, and then promptly told the audience it really wasn't her responsibility to teach but rather theirs to learn. *Goodnight, all!* Where are we failing in teaching and expecting good (and accurate!) interpretation? From what I've seen, California State Parks is doing a better job than most, but there is always room for improvement.

I've always believed an interpreter is one part educator and one part performer. Interpretation is an art, but it can be learned. But are we in State Parks and NPS really teaching? Is anyone out there evaluating? Tilden

said interpretation has as its chief aim not education but revelation, and that it seeks to provoke; that if it does not connect with something within the experience of the listener, it fails. Ranger Vic Maris and I used to call this "attaching the miracle" to what we present. We had those discussions under desert skies filled with stars after a long day of writing tickets and giving first aid to off-highway vehicle violators. The law enforcement function was just part of protecting "our park." Interpretation was another way, and all we were doing was sharing what we knew about our home with people around a campfire at night. Let's face it; we haven't been particularly good stewards of the land over the past 200 years here. Even worse stewardship examples exist in other parts of the world. Visitors are not going to get a lesson on good stewardship of the land from a TV in their motor home. They aren't going

to get it from wordy texts (that we know they don't even read) on interpretive panels in the park. They need an intelligent and entertaining chance to hear it from us. We need to care and continue in learning and improving so we can "attach the miracle."

I saw the valley girl ranger leave in her new ranger sport utility vehicle. I had visions of her returning to her personal BMW and her Park Service housing made from virgin old-growth red cedar.

My seven year-old-son loved the program and wants the spotted owl whistle.

¹ She never defined it, but from the program content I believe Ex-Lax helps

² Also, I know for a fact that virgin old-growth forests are where you can find Bigfoot, Jimmy Hoffa and Elvis)



Is It Time to Buy a Digital Camera Yet?

By Brian Cahill, DIS
Colorado Desert District

Some of you may recall a previous article with the same title. Well, a whole lot has changed in this field since then, and it's time for an update.

The article did suggest a few features you might watch for in a digital camera, but my best advice two and a half years ago was to wait for the technology to mature. Well, it has matured quite nicely! It is still true that you will get more features, higher quality and lower price if you wait longer, but there is a whole lot you can do with today's digital cameras, and prices are quite reasonable.

The digital camera I use has earned a valued place in this interpreter's toolbox. But, like any tool, it is not right for every job. I still rely on good ol' 35 mm film for a lot and I'm not ready to give it up any time soon.

What do *you* use photos for? Interpreters use photos for slide programs, publications and exhibits, and also for Web sites and PowerPoint presentations. Archival considerations are also an issue. Before you reach for that camera, think a moment about how that image will be used.

When I need a few quick shots for a web page or a PowerPoint presentation there is nothing like a



digital camera. I can shoot the pictures, drop them into my computer and they are *immediately* available. Interpreters at Anza-Borrego took advantage of this by providing current photos in their weekly wildflower update on the Web. Updated photos were literally available on the Web the same day they were shot. People (lots of people) loved it! It can also be fun to grab that last image in the morning for that afternoon's PowerPoint presentation.

Our newsletters are full of *current* pictures thanks to digital photography. But simple newsletters and fliers that come out of a laser printer for reproduction on an office copy

machine are only a small part of the publishing spectrum. How about a park newspaper? For full-color professional printing, especially larger images (like a cover photo), I still insist on film. Four-color printing can be tricky and expensive, and I need maximum "punch" out of every image. It is also important to take that slide to a good color house for a high resolution drum scan instead of believing you can pull it off with a desktop scanner.

Exhibits are another use that can take advantage of the higher resolution film images. Exhibit designs may demand mural-size photos — very few digital images offer this much resolution.

There are a lot of folks who believe slide programs are yesterday's technology, but I'm not yet ready to accept that yet. When I really want to have an impact on an audience I find slides are brighter, sharper and the colors are better than projected digital images. Since a slide image is brighter and sharper, I can project it on a very large screen to add even more impact.

shoot digitally is just not worth archiving. They have served their purpose and can go away like so much pixel dust, as long as we are still shooting something else that will be around awhile.

So go ahead and get yourself a digital camera. If you want advice on which make or model, get a current computer or graphics magazine or

floppy disk in a standard format that anyone can use. Anyone can easily take the image from his or her disk and drop it right into a MSWord document or e-mail it to a colleague.

I also have a co-worker with a digital camera primarily for her own use. Her camera stores the image on a tiny flash media card. It shoots beautiful pictures! Due to the higher capacity of the flash media, it can capture much more resolution. But it is a bit of a hassle to get the picture into *my* computer. There are cables and flash card adapters and special software. Of course, her computer is already set up for this; it is just less convenient for the rest of us.

When I need a few quick shots for a Web page or a PowerPoint presentation there is nothing like a digital camera. I can shoot the pictures, drop them into my computer and they are immediately available.

Likewise, if you compare the cost of putting an interpreter out there with the latest digital doodads vs. sending her out with a slide projector and a few rolls of film, you will find slide programs are still very attractive.

And how many times have you dug back into the park files to use an image that was shot in the 1950s? I'll even admit that I'm not using old pictures only for historical comparisons. Some of the scenery shots are just as good today as they were 20 (or more) years ago!

Where will today's digital images be in 20 years? Sure, we could set up a massive digital archive, and we are moving slowly in that direction. But I'll admit that much of what I

research it on the Internet. You will find in-depth comparisons of features and performance that you can weigh against your needs and budget. But let me offer some general observations from my experience.

It seems every camera brags about how many mega-pixels it can capture. Sure, one of the critical factors is image resolution, but that might not be the most crucial factor depending on your needs. Convenience is worth a lot, too! We have one digital camera that is shared by a wide variety of users. One day an interpreter is using it and the next a maintenance mechanic might have it to document an engineering problem. Of course, the different users need to get their images onto their **own** computers. Our shared camera stores the images on a standard

So compare all the factors, get what works best for you and start shooting digital. But shoot a little film too, you'll be glad you did.

Watch This Space!

Of course this technology is still maturing and there will be lots of new goodies to tempt us. One new gizmo just announced as we go to press is (e)film. It is an electronic film cartridge that slips into the back of your existing 35mm camera! It requires no camera modifications and uses standard SLR camera lenses and features to shoot digital pictures. Check it out at www.siliconfilm.com

California State Parks Foundation

Ranger Lane Volunteer Fund

I often hear from park staff about their need for small amounts of money to assist them with their volunteer projects, and here is the answer. Below, for your reference, is a summary of a grant program available to support state park volunteer programs through the California State Parks Foundation. Good Luck!

Heather Fargo
Volunteer Programs Manager
(916) 653-8819

The Ranger Lane Volunteer Fund was founded in 1996 at the California State Parks Foundation by Honorary California State Park Ranger Bill Lane. The Fund is specifically for state park projects and programs that leverage the efforts of volunteers.

Who can apply?

With the approval of the District Superintendent, the following may apply:

- .. State park staff
- .. State park volunteers
- .. Cooperating associations



What types of projects will be funded?

Projects must benefit the department's volunteer programs

Projects that support the recruitment, training or recognition of volunteers

Materials and supplies to implement a volunteer project (Funds for volunteers to construct the Indian Memorial at Sonoma SHP, for example)

Tools and equipment, including computers, software and printers that support volunteers (Marshall Gold Discovery SHP was able to purchase a computer, and many parks were able to purchase tools and equipment for Earth Day events)

Copies of videos and printed materials to support State Park non-profit organizations (e.g. fundraising, training and management)

Matching funds may be available for special events put on by volunteers or supporting volunteer projects (Food and printed materials were purchased for the Park Heritage Days)

How much can I ask for?

Grants range from \$500 to \$5,000 with most in the \$500 to \$2500 range.

Restrictions?

Funding is not provided for the following:

- .. Capital campaigns
- .. Staffing or operations
- .. Routine maintenance or infrastructure

How do I apply?

A request should be submitted to the California State Parks Foundation which describes in one or two pages the **Who, What, Where and Why** of the proposal. Requests can be submitted anytime and are reviewed as received.

All requests should be sent to:

Janet Benjamin
 Marketing and Development Manager
 CA State Parks Foundation
 P.O. Box 548
 Kentfield CA 94914



Book Review

By Ellen Absher

Interpreter 1, Mt. San Jacinto S.P.

Adrienne Olmstead. **My Nature Journal, A Personal Nature Guide for Young People.** 2000. Lafayette, CA: Pa'jaro. 176 pp. illus. For ages 8 and older.

As I read through this book I kept thinking to myself, "hmm—that's good information" and "I'll have to remember that." *My Nature Journal* is a well thought-out and presented interactive learning tool for both children and adults. It provides opportunities for parents and children to work together, and time and places for youngsters to "do their own thing." The journal puts all your senses to work. Not only is it visually pleasing with beautifully detailed

illustrations, it is full of sensory awareness activities.

It is also a teacher's delight. *My Nature Journal* is divided into five sections; four focus on natural communities, and the fifth is a special section called "Twilight." Included in each section is something unique to each community, covering topics from trees and flowers to reptiles and amphibians, and a bit about geology. The concepts of adaptations, communities, cycles and changes are woven into the basic, but captivating natural science information. Each section also includes space for recording individual observations and

measurements, and self-expression through writings and drawings. The end of the journal includes opportunities to keep track of flora and fauna seen, the moon phases, a glossary of new terms, and an index. As a State Park Interpreter, I find the information and activities provided by *My Nature Journal* extremely useful.

Binding: hard cover; hidden wire-o
ISBN: 09672459-1-5

For additional information contact:

Lois Olmstead

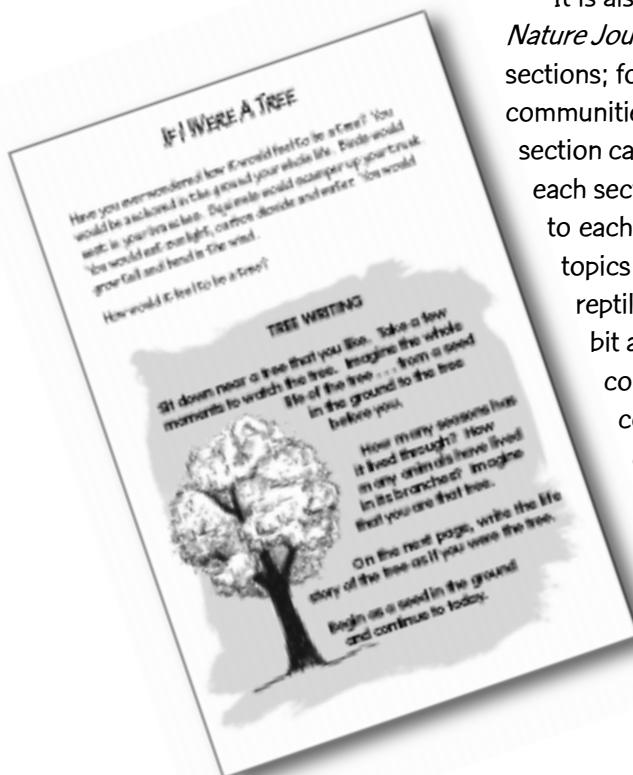
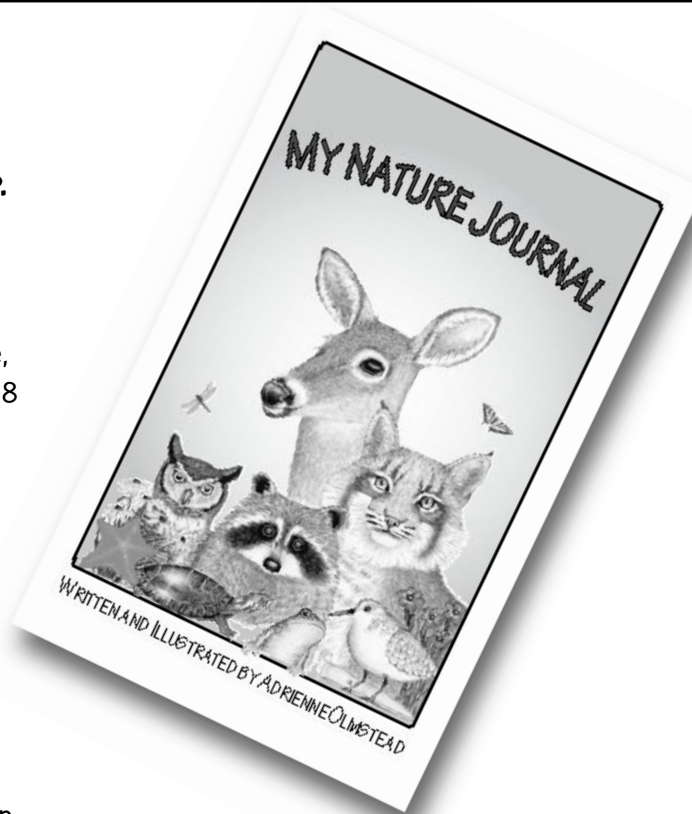
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www.pajaro.com



Top Ten Lessons I've Learned

About First Impressions, Lasting Impressions, and Hospitality

**Melanie Thornton, Toltec Mounds
State Park, Scott, Arkansas**

Gone are the days of visiting parks or museums and simply enjoying the visit. Since I began my career as an interpreter four years ago, I have joined the ranks of those whose vacations are always learning vacations. We enter museums and parks with a mental notepad. We make notes of what works and doesn't work and then bring them back home to our own site. The following is a collection of some of those mental notes.

1. Don't hesitate to tell people where to go. It happened more than once, but at one site in particular it was difficult to tell which door to enter. Once inside, there was no one there until a few minutes after we entered. After I finished viewing the exhibits, there was no sign explaining where to exit for the self-guided tour. While on the trail, the term 'self-guided' was questionable. I realized how awkward it feels not to know where to go and how important it is to tell people where things are — either with signs or verbally. At another museum I visited, the opposite was true. Any time I looked confused, there was someone asking if they could help. What a difference it made!

2. Be there! At one site, no staff member was there. I was visiting a historic site I learned about in a



brochure. Signs pointed the way to the site, and two signs provided a brief amount of information about the site, but there was no visitor center and no one there to answer questions. William S. Carr said (and I paraphrase) having a park without an interpreter is like inviting someone to your house and leaving when they arrive. Visiting this site left me feeling this way. I had so many questions but no way to quench my thirst for knowledge.

3. If you can't be there, leave a message. I realize we will never reach the point of having interpreters at every site. If we can't have someone there we can at least leave a message for the visitors when they come — a brochure, a wayside exhibit, an information kiosk, or a suggestion of where to find out more about this special place.

4. What you don't know can hurt you. I have always been an advocate of using the phrase "I don't know" whenever necessary. Both as a counselor trainer and in interpretive workshops I stress knowing one's limits and never bluffing! But at a recent program I attended I realized the opposite of bluffing is also a problem. The presenter began the program by apologizing for being new and from another state. Throughout she followed everything she told us with something she did not know about the critter she was holding. Many of the things she apologized for would never have come up if she had just stuck to what she did know.

5. If you can't say something nice, bite your tongue 'til it bleeds ... or no whining, please! Nothing is worse than going somewhere to have a nice time and being held hostage by a staff person who wants to complain about his or her troubles.

6. Clothes don't make the man (or the woman)! When I walked through the door of one museum, there were two people behind the counter. One was in uniform and the other was in casual clothes. When I approached the counter with some questions, the non-uniformed staff person began to answer enthusiastically while the uniformed person stood back looking sheepish. We

the chance to show them how much we know.

8. You don't always get what you pay for (or there really are free lunches sometimes). On one vacation, I went to two museums. The first cost me \$14.50; the second was free. Both were great museums. For \$14.50, though, I was made to feel like I was a part of a cattle drive

Having a park without an interpreter is like inviting someone to your house and leaving when they arrive.

need to remember that our behavior speaks louder than our uniform.

7. Neatness counts! Even though our appearance is only part of the way we gain credibility, it still counts. If we are disheveled and frumpy, a visitor may never give us

— herded through one line after another. It cost me nothing at the other place to be treated with the most hospitality and individualized service I had ever received in a museum. Both museums had close to 1,000 visitors in that one day.

9. Let a smile be your welcome mat. A couple of places did have a staff person who could be seen from the moment I entered the door. That was good, but at one place the person looked stoic and was oblivious to our entry. This kind of reception made it hard to approach the staff person for information. Once I asked, she was helpful, but I had to 'get up the nerve' to ask. What a difference it made when the person at the front desk of another museum smiled and said "Hello!"

10. What's good for the goose isn't always good for the gander — or even the other 10 geese. At the other extreme of stoic was a woman who greeted me enthusiastically when I came in the door. She continued to talk to me as I looked around. When I asked a question, she did not know the answer. She tried to find the answer, but went about it in a haphazard way.

After I had experienced both extremes, I was talking to my travelling companion about the two women. I preferred the less friendly person with good information. He preferred the more friendly woman with less information. That just goes to show that different visitors have different preferences. It is our job to be prepared to respond to different people in different ways. That means we need to learn to listen to our visitors — their words and their body language — and respond accordingly.



New Exhibits Planned for Cuyamaca Rancho S.P.

By David Krimmel
DKD Design

The State of California has recently completed concept drawings for new interpretive exhibits at the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park visitor center. This center is located in the Dyar House, a stone mountain cabin built in the 1920s. Project manager Jim Burke, Interpretive Specialist Brian Cahill, and consultant David Krimmel met as the core team to develop the drawings. Other content specialists and interested parties were included as needed. The current exhibit, installed many years ago, has poor sight lines, is very worn, and is in serious need of an update.

The theme of the proposed exhibition is "Layers of Resources Over Time." A panoramic photograph of the park was selected as the central image of this theme. This theme photograph will be used in each section of the exhibit as a visual cue to the visitor that the same locale is used in each section of the exhibition. Exhibits in the space will include natural history, cultural history, mining, the California Conservation Corps and park management issues. All the stories in this exhibit take place in different time periods. Overall design considerations of the space included disabled access issues, interactive areas, room within the exhibit space for groups to meet, general seating areas, lighting, sound, sight lines, displays for brochures, and budget constraints.



The introduction to the exhibit will be a four-sided module. The first side the visitor sees presents the introduction and theme of the exhibit. Below the theme statement will be a hands-on cast relief model of the park area. One important element of the introduction area is that, with the use of a frosted acrylic introduction graphic panel, visitors will be able to see beyond the introduction area and orient themselves within the space.

From the introduction area and to the visitors left will be the natural history area, or first of the exhibits. This is developed around a curved backdrop mounted with the theme photograph. On the backdrop will be room for an array of smaller overlay photos, possibly of plant life. Both ends of the exhibit backdrop are enclosed by a rock diorama. The second side of the introduction module faces toward this, and provides seating. This seating area will be

of naturalistic rock. The natural history story begins with the geology of the area. In front of the theme image backdrop are exhibition cases which will enclose taxidermy samples of the wildlife. Attached to each case will be hands-on examples of fur from the animals. An interpretive railing unit between the cases and the backdrop will accommodate graphics and possibly other interactive units. This area will also include books on wildflowers which the visitor can review. These have proven extremely popular in the past, so extra room was allocated for them in the new design. The third side of the intro module has space for interpretation of bird and insect populations. The last side of the intro module has room below for pull-out drawers to house examples of artifacts, insects, or other materials. These drawers could also be used to store educational props for docents. This concludes the natural history section.

This room also contains a stone fireplace. The fireplace will be flanked by presentations of the house history and the park mission statement. Just beyond this will be an interactive computer with park information, printed handouts, and exhibit notebooks describing hard-to-access areas of the exhibition for the disabled visitor.

The next room will present the cultural history of the park. Exhibits will center around the same thematic image as seen in the natural history section. Examples of Kumeyaay pottery and woven baskets will be shown in the context of the materials used to make them. This section will also include a station where children can make rubbings of rock art found

in the park. Kumeyaay reed sandals will be set as they would be seen by someone wearing them. An interactive, How would you do it? display in this section will ask the visitors how they would find shelter, obtain food, and use tools. Displays in this section will include space for a plethora of Native American artifacts, such as arrowheads and tools. Graphic panels will describe the arrival of Europeans and the ranching that took place in the park.

The next section of the exhibition will focus on the park's mining history. Although this was a major activity in the park, it was decided to treat this section as a way to whet the visitors' appetite to inspect the actual site. This exhibit will include hands-on

displays of ore and the mine's steam whistle. The thematic image again forms the backdrop for the graphic panels.

The activities of the California Conservation Corps comprise the next section. In front of the thematic backdrop image, the CCC's use of stone work is illustrated with hands-on dioramas. Opposite the main image, the visitor will see a more intimate case display of local CCC artifacts and letters from home. The last corner of this room will contain "then-and-now" images.

The last room will contain a changing gallery, with the thematic image providing continuity. This image will be mounted with overlays describing park management issues. Current issues include mountain lions, fire management and endangered species. These panels can be expanded and changed as needed. The final exhibit will be the theme photograph located in the direction of the exit, leading into the gift shop. The theme and introduction exhibit will be repeated here to attract visitors looking in from the gift shop area. Funding for the interpretation of this site is supported by donations from the CRSPIA foundation.

David Krimmel is the owner of David Krimmel Design (DKD), a design firm specializing in exhibition development and design. DKD developed the interpretive concept illustrations and floor plan for the new exhibition at the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park visitor center. David Krimmel can be reached at (619) 563-9717, or visit his upcoming Web site at www.designexhibition.com.



New Activity Flyers Coming Soon!

INT 101-A
General Purpose Flyer (ltr)



INT 101-B
General Purpose Flyer (lg)



INT 201-A
Youth Program Flyer



The venerable DPR 535 (park activities flyer) will be getting a new look this spring. Three colorful border papers with the Department's new logo will soon be available. These papers are being designed by the Marketing Section for bulletin board use, but they will serve as lively event programs, agendas, slide-in binder covers, and the like. They are not for use as official stationery, however.

Park staff will be notified by memo when the flyers are ready for ordering. At that time, you'll be able to order them from the Departmental Warehouse on a DPR 139, Supply Order (available in the share folder on the WAN). On your supply order in the description column you can specify either:

INT 101-A General Purpose Flyer (letter size)

INT 101-B General Purpose Flyer (legal size)

INT 201-A Youth Program Flyer

These papers will have a high post-consumer recycled content and will work well with most printers, copiers, and yes, even your cherished 1978 Royal typewriter.

Also coming soon — MS-Word templates designed to complement the new flyers, plus a clip art folder available on both the WAN and internet. These will help you produce bulletins that are eye-catching as well as creative.

For additional information or comments, call Mary Stokes at Four Rivers District, (209) 826-1197 or email to mstok@parks.ca.gov.

Interpretive Improvement Effort Underway

By Wes Chapin,
DIS Channel Coast District

If moles are capable of experiencing ecstasy, this must be the time of year when they do. Spring rains have transformed the hard, unfriendly ground into luxuriously soft earth, and you can almost imagine the silky little shovelers quivering with joy as they burrow busily along, pushing up those telltale hummocks.

The current effort underway to improve interpretation in California State Parks reminds me in some ways of mole work—a lot of important effort being exerted by many dedicated individuals, but so far only slight evidence of it unless you know where to look.

At the recently concluded annual meeting of District Interpretive Coordinators in Dana Point, some of that effort was brought into the light by members of the Interpretive Performance Improvement Team (IPIT), including Carol Nelson, Elizabeth Hammack, Broc Stenman, Scott Nakaji and Wes Chapin.

Interpretive Training

Led by the Department's Training Officer Broc Stenman and Training Officer Scott Nakaji, IPIT has extensively overhauled most formal interpretive training courses at the Mott Training Center. You will find all of the details in Scott's article on the following page.

District Improvement Teams

Another focus of the department's interpretive improve-

ment effort is taking place at the District level where Interpretive Coordinators are helping to create ***District Interpretive Improvement Teams***. The majority of Districts now have some form of such teams in place to coordinate and invigorate interpretive improvement efforts at the local level.

Aiming For Excellence

Interpreters and their supervisors now have a major new way to measure their progress in improving their interpretive skills with the release of ***Aiming for Excellence***, a handbook filled with evaluation techniques. The new handbook was developed by a team under the direction of Linda McDonald (recently moved from Interpretive Services to the new ADA Transition Team). One of the most exciting features of *Aiming for Excellence* is a new tool that brings together all the elements of good interpretation into a simple-to-remember acronym, R.A.P.P.O.R.T., which stands for "relevant", "accurate", "provocative", "program accessible", "organized", "retained", and "thematic". By making sure that interpretive activities include each of these seven elements, interpreters are sure to establish a rapport with their audiences, which is essential for successful interpretation.

Support For Improvement Effort Found Throughout California State Parks

One of the people primarily responsible for the changes occurring in interpretation in California State Parks is Donna Pozzi, Chief of Interpretation. Her concern for

providing the best interpretive training possible to our interpreters led to the formation of IPIT. She continues to be an advocate for interpretation at the executive level and at other venues such as the recent Superintendent's Conference. But she is not alone. This improvement effort has also received support from Division Chiefs John Knott and Dick Troy. Both are working to see that interpretation is included in performance contracts with District Superintendents, who in turn are seeing that interpretation is not forgotten in the struggle to balance conflicting priorities. Another member of IPIT, Dave Gould, Chief Ranger at the Four Rivers District, continues to encourage his peers at Chief Rangers' meetings as they focus on improving their interpretive programs. Interpretive Coordinators are working daily to facilitate improvement of their districts' interpretive programs.

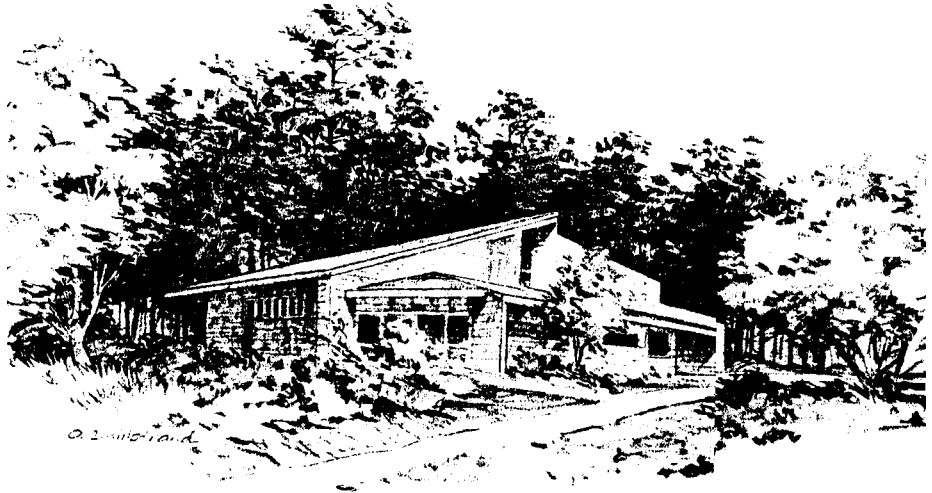
Interpreters in Sacramento Headquarters...field interpreters (their numbers are growing)...overworked field staff who make time to improve their interpretive activities...dedicated docents and other volunteers...the list of moles plowing the rich soil of interpretive opportunity in California State Parks goes on and on. Most of their toil receives scant attention in the madness of day-to-day work, but if you listen carefully, you can hear the sound of tunneling!



Interpretive Training Update

By Scott Nakaji, Training Officer

In 1997 Park Stewardship Policy Group created and charged an Interpretive Performance Improvement Team (IPIT) to perform an assessment of the Department's interpretive training program. Information was gathered using an interpretive survey that was sent to field level interpreters and supervisors in the summer of 1998. Utilizing that information, IPIT set out to improve interpretive training by making it more meaningful and applicable to the field.



In the survey, respondents noted several factors that would best assist individuals in improving their personal as well as district level interpretive performance:

- More specific/specialized training
- Doing programs/practice
- Observation of others
- Interaction/networking
- Interpretive techniques
- Training of volunteers and seasonal employees

In response to these needs, the Mott Training Center, in conjunction with several of DPR's finest interpreters and other agencies, created new and revised training opportunities in order to improve individual skills and district/unit level interpretive programming. Following is a synopsis of the new training opportunities that have been offered for 1999/2000.

Skills for Interpreting to Children (SIC) – Formerly Interpretive Methods Training, SIC was held in

October 1999 at the Ralston White Retreat in Mill Valley. Participants included interpreters and rangers from DPR, NPS, East Bay Regional Park District and US Army Corps of Engineers. Each day offered an inspiring and interactive session as groups traveled throughout the Bay Area to locations such as Bothin Marsh, Ring Mountain, Angel Island, Tilden Park, California Academy of Sciences, Muir Woods and much more.

At each location, participants were able to observe children's programs and learn new techniques. Evening social sessions, both formal and informal, with networking opportunities occurred each night. Plans are underway for a fall 2000 session as well as a Southern California interagency session with DPR, NPS, USDA Forest Service and BLM.

Continuing Interpretation (CI) –

Continuing Interpretation was split into three separate classes, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources and Recreation, for 1999-2000 in order to meet the identified need for specific/specialized interpretive training. CI Natural Resources was held in October 1999, and it proved to be highly successful, as it focused on the interpretation of wildlife, nature walks, audio/visual interpretation and natural interpretive methods and resources.

CI Cultural Resources received only average evaluations for its first presentation. Efforts are under way to further separate it from CI Natural, and to introduce a more balanced blend of advanced interpretive principles and cultural resource issues. CI Recreation was held in late March 2000, and it focused on non-traditional approaches to interpretation, community outreach and other issues that face interpreters in more urbanized work locations.

Training for Interpretive Trainers – Training for Interpretive Trainers was held in January 2000 at Mott Training Center to rave reviews from participants. The focus of this training was the delivery of interpretive training to volunteers and seasonal employees at the district level. Instructors such as Dr. Sam Ham, Dr. Howard Murray, Randy Widera, Julie Sidel, Christine Revelas and Michael Green were brought in to introduce interpretive techniques and issues and to explain how they can be used to deliver high quality training.

A sample agenda and list of interpretive principles for an "Introduction to Interpretation" session was given to each participant to assist in the design and implementation of local training. Several class participants have already begun to apply the information presented in this training back at their units.

Interpretive Program Coordination and Supervision (IPCS) – To be held in April 2000, IPCS will focus on unit/district level interpretive program coordination and delivery, and how it ties in to district strategic planning and measurement. Interpretive plans, themes and evaluation will also be addressed.

Regional Interpretive Workshops – A Coastal Wetlands Workshop, hosted by Bay Area District and coordinated by District Interpretive Specialist Gail Sevens was held at the Pigeon Point Lighthouse State Historic Park in Pescadero in late January. A Desert Ecology Workshop hosted by Colorado Desert District,

coordinated by District Interpretive Specialist Brian Cahill will be held in early May. Regional workshops offer another opportunity for specific/specialized interpretive training and allow volunteers and seasonal employees an opportunity to attend formal DPR training. We are looking forward to a Redwood Ecology Workshop in the fall of 2000 and are still looking for a host for the spring 2001 workshop.

As you can see, high quality interpretive training has been a

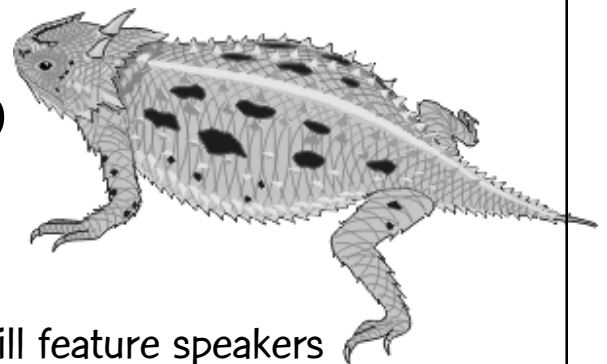
priority for Mott Training Center this past year, and it will continue to be a priority in the future. IPIT continues to meet regularly to evaluate and improve departmental interpretive training. Any and all suggestions for the improvement of interpretive training are welcome. Contact your local IPIT member for input.

IPIT members are: Broc Stenman, Wes Chapin, Dave Gould, Elizabeth Hammack, Carol Nelson, Jeanne Eckstrom and Scott Nakaji.

Regional Workshop

Understanding and Interpreting Deserts

May 8-10



The workshop will feature speakers presenting current research findings along with hands-on experiences and some very unique field training opportunities. There will be no charge for permanent DPR employees and a very reasonable price for others. Watch for registration information soon!

Free registrations available!

National Interpreter's Workshop 2000

The National Association for Interpretation's annual workshop is quite likely the best interpretive training available anywhere. This year we are fortunate to have this workshop in the West. Many Southern California interpreters will find the drive to Tucson is shorter than a trip to Asilomar.

Perhaps **YOU** should consider heading to Tucson this November. After this year the National Interpreters Workshop travels to Virginia Beach and Iowa before returning to the West. It might cost you a few dollars, but it is certainly a worthwhile investment in your interpretive career. We have a whole lot of fun there, too. Even when the workshop is clear across the country, you will always find a half-dozen California State Park interpreters who would not miss it.

It is always a challenge to send our staff to this workshop since official authorization for out-of-state travel is often difficult to obtain. Competition will no doubt be fierce for the limited out-of-state travel funding again this year. According to Department Training Officer Broc Stenman, though, "we are doing everything possible to give more of our employees the opportunity to attend this training."

If you are tempted to give the National Interpreters Workshop a try, now is the time to start planning. Permanent employees should consider submitting an Out of State Travel Request (DPR 791) for the workshop.



WEAVING THE FUTURE WITH THREADS FROM THE PAST

**NATIONAL INTERPRETERS
WORKSHOP 2000
TUCSON, ARIZONA**

These must be submitted by April 17. You may be hesitant to apply, since the chance of getting a fully paid trip to the workshop is small. But make the system work by at least submit-

ting the form. There are a lot of you who really should attend this workshop. It is up to you to make sure that Headquarters knows you are interested.

How about an opportunity to write your own ticket to the National Interpreters Workshop? This special offer is available to anyone who presents interpretive programs for California State Parks — Yes, even volunteers and seasonals! Two free workshop registrations will be awarded to the winners of an essay contest. According to contest facilitator Bill Lindemann, you are invited to submit a 200-word essay on any aspect of interpretation. See contest details in the box below.

We are also pleased to announce California State Parks will again be a co-sponsor of the NAI workshop. This year state parks will be supporting this workshop at the highest level, Platinum Circle. Donna Pozzi, Chief of Interpretation, recently announced the \$5000 sponsorship.

NIW 2000 Essay Contest

Win a free registration to the workshop!

Write a short (200 word max.) essay on interpretation

Put a cover page on it with your name, address, phone, position, location, & title.

Do not put your name or any identification on the essay page.

Mail it no later than July 15 to:

"Contest" Bill Lindemann, PO Box 266, Tahoma, CA 96142.

Winning Essays will appear in Catalyst

California's Tapestry

A Section of *The Catalyst*

Office of Community Involvement

Issue #12 - Spring 00

Moving Toward Relevancy

By Jack Shu

How does an organization stay relevant to the needs of its clients? Where are interpreters going with all of our themes and new digital tools?

Organizations that provide educational programs like the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, as well as non profits like "4H" and the California Native Plant Society, are or have gone through strategy processes to help them with these questions. California State Parks is completing its process, called a *Path to Our Future*, to develop a vision for the Department. In the area of interpretation, how might a new vision and strategy change the content of programs? How can we address some of the issues that this process has already brought up, such as serving a more diverse audience and being more inclusive of all Californians?

A look at Project Learning Tree (PLT), one of most widely used environmental education curricula in the country, may provide some clues of what to expect. PLT is one of the

oldest providers of high quality curricula. Twenty years ago, its books containing lesson plans for primary grades to secondary grades focused on themes related to trees and natural ecosystems. Administered nationally by the American Forest Foundation, its current mission is... *to increase students' understanding of our environment; stimulate students' critical and creative thinking; develop students' ability to make informed decisions on environmental issues; and instill in students the commitment to take responsible action on behalf of the environment.*

In order to stay relevant with its programs, PLT sought input from environmental education professionals as well as a number of different constituents. PLT changed the type of themes it uses and the way its lessons are presented. In recent years it has placed more attention on developing lessons for secondary students. In 1998 it developed a unit entitled *Focus on Risk* for middle school students which engages young teens in measuring risks for many environ-

mental conditions. The unit can be used throughout the country, with many of the lessons focused on issues which affect urban communities. Studying toxicity and the level of risks for hazards like radon and chlorine as well as placing these issues in the context of the students' community makes lessons more relevant. Students are thus prepared to deal with complex urban environmental problems, things they are more likely to have to contend with on a day-to-day basis.

Lessons are no longer about the study of plants and animals in a distant forest. They are about the student's home environment and how they can improve it. With the help of diverse focus groups, PLT is now in the process of developing a high school unit centered on the place the students live in. In California, PLT is seeking ties with bilingual education.

PLT continues to be a strong national program, and its future seems promising. While focused on educating students, it has placed relevancy over tradition. Likewise, in order for our department to remain relevant, we need to develop new program content areas that serve the needs of people.

Submit articles and comments to: Jack K. Shu, Park Superintendent, OCI- Southern California, c/o Southern Service Center, 8885 Rio San Diego Drive, San Diego 92108, Ph# (619) 220-5330.

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